ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

An information retrieval system for automatically retrieving information related to the context of an active task being manipulated by a user. The system observes the operation of the active task and user interactions, and utilizes predetermined criteria to generate context representation of the active task that are relevant to the context of the active task. The information retrieval system then processes the context representation to generate queries or search terms for conducting an information search. The information retrieval system determines the relevance of a word to the context by utilizing an adaptive weighting system. The information retrieval system assigns varying weights to different attributes of a word and calculates an accumulated weight of the word by accumulating all weights assigned to the word. The attributes may include word size, style, location of the word, etc. The system then ranks the importance of words based on their respective accumulated weight, and chooses words that rank within a predetermined number from the top to form search terms to conduct an information search using various data sources.